



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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HAM-CON 2024 IS HERE FEBRUARY 24th 8AM-1PM

In one week will be RANV's big presentation of the year: HAM-CON. We have a venue, we have a program, and we have a plan (I think) to pull this all off. We just need butts in the door. We will have another "really great shoow" for y'all!

At one point or another many of us are looking to buy a new HF radio. For that very topic, we have Rob Sherwood NC0B of Sherwood Engineering to speak about what features to be looking for. And once you get that radio, you must hook it up correctly. Noted ham radio author Ward Silver N0AX will talk about Grounding and Bonding. And once you get everything working, you'll want to work all the DX and win the contests. Yuri Onipko VE3DZ WON the WRTC (Ham Olympics) last summer and he will tell you how he did it. Some of us live in places where a good antenna is a dream. If you are in that situation, go on the road! Chris Knox KI1P will give details and also give tours of his converted TV van, which was heavily used in the Vermont QSO Party.

In a little over a month, we will be treated to a total eclipse, right here in Vermont. There are many ways to have fun with this besides watching and Jack St. Louis, N1XGB will explain. And we need

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Meetings: 2nd Thursday • 7:00 PM
Holy Family Parrish Hall
30 Lincoln Street
Essex Junction, Vt

Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1GQR

New Hams, Mentoring:
RANVMentor@gmail.com

to keep amateur radio strong. ARRL New England Division Director Fred Kemmerer AB1OC will discuss this with us in the ARRL Forum.

We'll also have fun! HAM-CON is the only ham convention to run game shows, and this year, we will have "Who Wants to go on a DXpedition" and "The Weakest Radio Link". For more fun, operate our in-house special event station, W1V and see how far you can work. We'll also have a flea market, demonstrations and even a VE Session.

Got stuff to sell? Fill out our information sheet and drop your stuff off at the RANV table Friday night or Saturday morning. Our trained staff will do their best to unload your goodies!

So – your homework! If you haven't bought a ticket – DO SO! Won't be able to attend in person – then attend On-Line! And then call up every ham and potential ham you know and have them attend. Pick them up and drive them, if you must. We really need to get more folks to the show. HAM-CON, now in its 44 th year, is still "The Best Little Hamfest in the World". Everyone has fun at HAM-CON. All you need to do is show up.

Full Details: <http://www.ham-con.org>

THE WEEKEND BEFORE THE VERMONT QSO PARTY

Mitch W1SJ

I remember hearing about Clipperton Island when I was little Johnny Novice as it was a rare DX entity back then as well. I didn't work them back then, but I made sure to get on and grab them this time. On the last Thursday of January, I chased TX5S and got them on the 5 highest HF bands. The pileups were huge, and it took time to get through on each band, but patience won out. I wanted to finish them off on the lower bands but Friday night was the first half of the CQ 160 Meter CW Contest and I would be tied up with that.

Unlike the awful conditions during the ARRL and Stew Perry contests, the conditions to Europe were amazing. Between 10:30 and 1:30, I had pileups of DX stations, an unheard-of feat on my low dipole, which is only .08 wavelengths above ground. I

ended up with 128 DX stations in the log that first night.

I learned that Clipperton would be shutting down early after Saturday due to incoming poor weather, so I had to make a choice. Quickly, I realized that I would be able to contest and chase simultaneously with the 2-radio setup I have. This was relatively easy on 30 and 40 meters as TX5S was on FT8. So, I put the second computer to work on calling them over and over while I was working the pileups on 160 meters. Chasing them on 80 meters was more challenging as they were on CW on that band. I'm not all that good on CW on one band, and a lot worse on two bands, but I finally got through! Yes, this was nuts! I shut down a bit early at 4AM. With the Winter Breakfast that morning, if I stayed up until sunrise, I would have looked like an extra from "Night of the Living Dead".

Unfortunately, on the 2nd night, conditions were not very good and I only worked 7 more DX stations. I did manage to work TX5S on 40 phone with IK0SVC operating, whom I met at HV0A at the Vatican.

With many years of contesting in my experience, it is always fun and never gets boring!

VERMONT QSO PARTY FROM W1NVT

Mitch W1SJ

With enhanced HF conditions, the 2024 Vermont QSO Party promised to be something special - and it didn't disappoint!

With the addition of a second K3 to the shack arsenal, I was prepared to put up a serious improvement over previous years. The first 2 hours were spent in full single op – multi- multi-mode. That meant I was transmitting simultaneously on 20 and 40 meters and working pileups simultaneously on both bands. How do you handle pileups on 2 bands simultaneously? I cannot really explain how this is done, but strongly recommend you seek professional help before trying this. The first hour put an amazing 215 QSO's in the log, and the next 3

hours slightly less than that. After that, I had dinner and watched TV while babysitting FT8.

Saturday morning, I got on in the midst of the EU-DX contest and had great runs of Europeans on 10 meters. As 10 meters slowed up, I tried 15 meters briefly, then 20 meters and went back to 10 meters for the afternoon. At noon, Ryan KC1KUW came on. He is a “veteran” from last year’s QSO Party and Field Day. It only took him 10 minutes to get warmed up before he starting running stations. I stepped out and went down for my afternoon nap. At 2, Eric KB1RVN came on. He has been licensed for over 10 years but has hardly operated. I got him up to speed and he too was running pileups in short order. While all this was happening, I was babysitting the second station on FT8.

In the evening, I jumped over to CW to operate in the NA Sprint. To do this, I had to change the contest exchange from giving the county to giving a serial number and name. It was a bit crazy, but it allowed me to put a lot of CW contacts in the log.

Sunday morning there was no DX contest running, so I decided to spend a few hours focusing on 10-meter FT4 where a lot of contacts were made. The rest of the day was spent on 10- and 20-meter phone on one radio and various bands on FT4 and FT8 simultaneously on the other radio. Paul AA1SU operated from 3 until 5:30 and provided me with the opportunity for a much-needed break. I finished up with another tremendous hour on 20-meter phone and simultaneously with big numbers on FT8.

I really do enjoy this event because it is a chance to meet up with ham pals who have moved away. They know I’ll be on from W1NVT and go looking for me. John KA1LQE from FL was the former police chief in Essex back in the 1980’s. Lanny, K1LEC from AR used to own Idlenot Dairy (anyone remember them?) in Springfield. Tony K1AX used to live in Vermont and now is in NY. Some other former Vermont hams who I frequently work (not this time) are KB1UM (known as Kaboom) in CO, Eric N1SRC (former RANV prez) in ID, Lou W3LPR in NC and Peter AE1T in NH (both former Field Day ops).

Overall, we had a pretty good response of Vermont operators with 4 mobile rovers making the rounds throughout Vermont counties and several fixed stations running up big scores. So far, over 300 logs from outside Vermont have been submitted, meaning I will be busy for the next couple of months!

VT QSO PARTY REPORTS FROM VERMONT STATIONS

KK1L (CHI)

I operated Friday night until 2:30 AM, with a break dealing with logging issues. Saturday was a full day from 8 AM until after 11 PM. I went back and forth between CW and digital and did not pick up the microphone until late afternoon. I did not spend a lot of time on 10 meters, and I might have tried too late. Numbers for me are down from last year, but my operating time mix was also quite different and not spending any time on Sunday made a big difference. I had a good time nonetheless.

K1ZK (CHI)

I was supposed to be away this weekend, but plans changed and I was able to get on. This was my first significant attempt running the FT modes for the QSO Party. I didn’t expect to compete with the big guns at KE1VT or W1NVT, so I’m not too disappointed. I’ll be better prepared in 2025!

K1BIF (CHI)

I started on 40 meters and had a 135 rate for 20 minutes, then fell back to a 65 rate, all this on my vertical. After 9:30 PM, phone QSO’s became sparse and FT8 was much better. Saturday, I started around 11 AM on 15 meters with a few good runs, and some DX, then went to 10 meters, which wasn’t all that productive for me. Saturday evening, 20 and 40 meters worked well on FTx. Sunday conditions were okay on 20 meter phone, a lot better than 15 meters. Sunday afternoon was all FT4 and FT8, with DX on 10, 12 and 15 meters.

KC1SFJ (CHI)

My QSO Party experience was a lot of fun! I operated on phone and FT8 during the contest. My newly cut resonant dipole handled 40 and 15 meters, and the G5RV at 50 feet covered 80 and 20 meters. I spent most of Friday setting up antennas and my pneumatic mast. I enjoy the building, setup, and planning almost as much as operating. Somewhere along the line I ended up with a bunch of noise and QSO's were lost to the weeds. I'm often hesitant to jump into a run sometimes, worrying that there might be someone under the noise I'm stomping on. But I managed a couple of sessions on 40 and 20 meters. I typically spend most contests listening and hunting stations, and through this practice I managed to catch a few Minnesota stations. But if you can't hear them, it is sure difficult to work them! I'm still just a novice general amateur! I'm looking forward to playing more radio to continue developing my contest skills and endurance.

KC1IFK (CHI)

This was my biggest personal effort in any contest to date with 565 QSO's on FT4 and FT8 running low power.

KI1P (Rover)

This was a five county and five park rove in my Ex-NBC news van outfitted with a 50 and a 40 foot mast holding dipoles on 80, 40, 20 and 10 meters. I got a late start Friday and arrived at Little River SP (WAS) at 10:30 and stayed on the air most of the night. Saturday, I was on from Sand Bar SP (CHI) from 9 AM to 4 PM. Then I was off to Grand Isle SP (GRA), and got a little sleep between QSO's. Next was Elmore SP (LAM) on Sunday morning. I left at 3 PM to go to the last leg of the tour, Crystal Lake SP (ORL). I made 1401 QSO's on phone and FTx while using 6 gallons of gas in the generator. That's 233.5 QSO's per gallon! Long trip. Had fun!

K1TTW (Rover)

It was a beautiful winter drive to Island Pond on Sunday morning from Danville. Band

conditions were good. I included both SSB and FT8 into the roving experience. Also, it was my first time I have tried to use FT8 in contesting and wow! I experienced my first pile up at FN44 with just my first CQ with everyone jumping in after the first 73! I didn't believe how FN44 was so hard to get. I had to cut off the FT8 contacts to make dinner with my grandchildren.

K1IB (Rover)

Murphy struck early. I had planned rover stops at county line locations touching on five different counties. As I was operating at my first Saturday stop, on the WNS/ORL county line, I noticed a plume of steam rising up from beneath the hood of my car. Oh no – a coolant leak! Fortunately, I was able to limp home, but that eliminated the possibility of further travel. I did get in a period of Friday evening operating from my home in WNS, adding some 40- and 80-meter points. Both bands sounded terrific that evening. Conditions seemed less good during my time on air Saturday with much QSB, weak signals, and unexpectedly few contacts west of the Mississippi.

N1FS (ADD)

Sadly, we blew up an amp and lost our SteppIR antenna. The transmitter also failed as a result of the antenna and amp failure. The SteppIR problem was a result of prior wind damage and we lost the feed line. Once we disconnected the transceiver from the amp, it worked as designed. The amp seems like a minor issue that I have yet to resolve, but the QSO party must go on! We ran the multiop on Saturday, but not on Sunday, sadly.

N1SP (BEN)

Murphy's Law struck early on, and my logging computer crashed as my first pileup had begun. I then had to catch up the log once the pileup was over. My power was 100 watts and antenna was a 135' doublet for all bands. The bands were kind and I beat my last year's score - which was my challenge! It was a lot of fun seeing all of the chasers from out of state. I worked many of them five or six times on various bands/modes.

K1EP (BEN)

Thanks to K2LE for the use of his station. Andy was using the station for the FOC marathon this weekend, so my operation had to work around his contesting. I did get a couple of good hours in. I had to make a cable to actually get on phone, so that didn't happen until later in the contest.

N1IBM (ORA)

This was my second year of participating. My HF station consists of a Yaesu FTdx5000. into a large horizontal loop of about 500 feet of wire supported by 3 tall trees. The wire is mostly like a triangle at about 50 feet high. It is amazing with the DX I can hear and work. After setting up N1MM and getting it configured so it logs the needed info, my thoughts were to run low power. I was not sure it was the best choice. I worked some great DX but I had many QSO's that took multiple tries and many where I just could not be heard. I made most of my QSO's using FT4 with some FT8. I had intended to do more SSB but I really never had a lack of stations to work. I tried the 40-meter Vermont activity time on Saturday but I had no copy on any Vermont stations. Had I made other contacts on SSB I think the added multipliers would have made for a better score. Conditions were very good, but 20 meters was not as good. Being able to use the WARC bands on FTx gave lots of options to find stations to work. I had one station who followed me to almost every band. Many others worked me 2-4 times on different bands. I guess I made a lot of people happy who are looking for Vermont. It sure was fun.

K1NZ HITS ALL THE COUNTIES (AND BREWERIES)

Maz K1NZ

A little over a week before the QSO party, I realized I had nothing going on that weekend and decided that with the 48-hour timeframe, a 14-county rove

was feasible. I picked out a route where I could maximize county lines while trying to avoid dupes. The only dupe was RUT and the only solo county was GRA. The county line on the sandbar is too narrow and I didn't have a boat! Friday, I started at the BEN/RUT line at the start of the contest. I did get "stopped" while wrapping up at the RUT/ADD line by a concerned police officer because he thought I might have needed assistance. I stayed the night at an Airbnb in Vergennes. On my way to GRA in the morning, I stopped at the Dutch Mill Diner in Shelburne for a big breakfast burrito that gave off egg roll vibes (it was fried!), At GRA there is a nice boat launch parking area that made for a good stop. The high bands were nicely open to Europe with the EU-DX contest going on, so it was an easy source of multipliers. Moving on to CHI/FRA, my ATAS 120 antenna decided it was going to start being cranky, picking 15 meters to be the band it decided it wasn't going to tune so I avoided 15 meters for the rest of the day.

I planned my route so that it would take me by Hill Farmstead which is one of my favorite breweries. This caused my LAM/ORL stop to be on a dirt road in the middle of nowhere. When I pulled over, I pulled over a little too far which meant that one of my wheels was now off of the road surface and I ended up in a ditch. I managed to escape after 20 minutes and set up on the other side of the road to avoid a potential repeat. The other fun part of being in the middle of nowhere is the lack of cell service. I called CQ for a good 20 minutes before I could finally get a text out to a friend to spot me. I then headed off to Hill Farmstead. After passing through East Craftsbury, the roads turned to dirt again, but with an additional ice-snow layer on top. This was probably one of the scariest 5 miles I have ever driven, but I lived to tell the tale. After some phenomenal beers at Hill Farmstead and a delicious prosciutto and goat cheese pizza at Red Barn Brewing, I hit the CAL/ESS line and then retired at an Airbnb in West Topsham.

On Sunday, I got to the WAS/ORA county line around 8 AM and I tried to hop on 40 meters. But alas, the ATAS decided that after all the QSO's last night it was now sick of 40 meters and wouldn't tune that band either. Instead, it was now happy with 15 meters. I made QSO's on each of the high

bands and then headed toward the last county line, the county line to confuse them all, WNH/WNS. Before I left, I figured I had time to try to figure out why the ATAS was being so cranky. As far as I can tell, with the antenna swaps back and forth between the ATAS and the 80-meter whip, the nut that holds the SO-239 into the mount loosened up enough that it was no longer making a good enough ground connection with the car which sent the ATAS into a tizzy. After an hour or so at the WNH/WNS line, I decided I had enough fun for one weekend and started heading back home. I stopped at Tree House in South Deerfield, MA for pizza and beer and then did a bonus POTA from Mount Sugarloaf. All in all, it was a fun weekend and I would definitely consider doing it again. Thank you to all the guys who were regular chasers!

Here's the brief summary: Miles driven: 576;
Counties activated: 14; Total QSO's: 316;
Breweries visited: 3; Ditches stuck in: 1; Rig: 2018 Camry and Yaesu FT-100D with ATAS-120 and Diamond HF80CL antennas.

Chittenden County Regional 2m FM Simplex Group Meeting

Zach **K1ZK**

The next meeting of the Chittenden County regional 2m FM simplex group is set for **8:00 pm on Thursday, March 14, 2024** on 146.55 MHz.

March 14 is Pi Day so it should be an easy date to remember! The 8pm time is right before the 8:30pm meeting of the [North East Weak Signal Group](#) 2m SSB simplex net on 144.250.

Don't forget we'll be back on Eastern Daylight Time on March 10.

Mark your calendars and feel free to announce the planned activity on nets, in newsletters, etc.



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NEXT MEETING

HamCon
Hampton Inn
Saturday Feb 24th 8:00am – 1:00pm

Meeting Topic

Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- Steering Wheel: 3rd Thur Noon; Guilty Plate Colchester
- VE Exams every 2nd Friday; Contact AB1WG for information
- Dues due? Pay online at www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html